



TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name Ricarra Jones and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, representing over 10,000 members in Maryland & Washington DC alone. Our union supports SB26 to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

When enacted, SB26 will benefit the 60,000 uninsured Marylanders who need health coverage. If patients have health insurance, they are less likely to delay receiving preventative and primary healthcare, so they are less likely to end up in the emergency room with a more severe condition. Maryland has the longest hospital wait times in the country in large part due to the severe short staffing crisis that is burdening overworked and underpaid healthcare workers. Much needs to be done on a policy front to implement safe staffing ratios in our hospitals – and in the meantime, making sure patients have affordable health insurance is important so that patients don't end up in the hospital with preventable illnesses. Furthermore, when patients don't receive healthcare until they are forced to go to the emergency room, their conditions become more expensive to treat, leaving them with crushing medical debt.

SB26 will also improve health equity in Maryland. Of the 60,000 uninsured Marylanders mentioned above, 23,000 Black are Marylanders and 28,000 are Latinx Marylanders. Furthermore, the bill would address other social determinants of health by making the enrollment process for utility assistance more efficient, broadening access to electric assistance, and enrolling seniors who qualify for Supplemental Security Income into SNAP automatically. Streamlining these processes will ensure that Marylanders don't lose their Medicaid coverage due to cumbersome, unnecessary paperwork.

1199SEIU UHW E. urges a **favorable** report on SB26. Thank you.

In Unity,

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